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VERSES

READ AT THE DINNER

OF THE

CLASS OF 1863

OF HARVARD COLLEGE

ON THE

FORTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS GRADUATION

By JAMES HERBERT MORSE

Printed by vote of the class for distribution among its members

BOSTON, 1908

HARVARD COLLEGE — CLASS OF 1863

FORTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

As the piper stands waiting, his lips on the reed,
The wind in his cheek, for the order to lead,
Old Time hobbles up, with a limp on, incog.,
Red necktie, white waistcoat — a rakish young dog.

"I lead," he mutters. You can't hear him speak
Till he rushes the bellows and gets out a squeak.
"Fall in, Fifty-eight, Fifty-nine! Don't you see
Those handsome old fellows? That's my Sixty-three!

"I've got 'em in train for the head of the line:
Gray, bald, thin, fat — by Jove, but they're fine!
Eh, Sixty, move up! Sixty-one, Sixty-two!
Now, piper, puff cheeks, and blow till you're blue!

"For there's the Old Class — Number One — the A-prime,
The 'ior' and 'issimus' of Father Time!
I'll lead 'em to-day. The best are the best,
And Time will have little to say of the rest.

"But stay till I count! Since the Fortieth I see
Nate Appleton's gone, Tuck, Putnam, Almy,
Marshall Ayres, Jere Curtin and Joseph Gillet,
Brown, Morison — each one has cancelled the debt,

"If any were due to my branch of the Bank —
Waters, Ward, Storrow Higginson, Nichols, Verplanck,
Stickney Lombard and Léve and Bellows — their ways
Have parted from yours in the long stream of days.

In exchange
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"Even Time has a tear — wears the band on his sleeve,
Though he bids you move on to the Sea, while you grieve;
For they wait for you, long for you, waving the hand —
Alas! had you eyes for that Beautiful Land!"

Thus speaks to you Time, that funny old chap —
You know him — he dandled you once on his lap;
Turned you over and spanked you, then kissed you, may be,
For he loved every boy of his own Sixty-three.

He has sorted the class, picked the best — so he said —
For some service above. Thus he speaks of our dead.
But the more he selects for the service, the more
He fondles the rest who still wait on the shore;

Has the gift of a cane for some limp he descries
In the legs of the runner who won the First Prize;
With number two glasses he straddles the nose
Of such as seem aiming awry at a rose;

The latest invention for those who can't hear
He hangs on the man with the musical ear.
He listens — "No need of the stethoscope there!
That wheeze means the heart! Give him grandfather's chair!"

So tender is Time for the fellows he loves!
Bless his warm heart, red necktie, white waistcoat and gloves,
A gentleman perfect, despite the incog.,
Whereby he appears like a rakish young dog.

Some thirty years hence, when a son of a son
Shall lift up his hat to our Very Last One
At the head of the line, where each man, if he durst,
Would bow himself out of the honors of "First,"

Time doubtless will find some sweet way to be near.
Yes, I see, even now he has got his good ear,
And I, by your kindness equipped as a bard,
Will take a bard's privilege and slip through the Yard,

Pass the Gate, pass the Door, and projecting that sense
Developed in bards, sing of thirty years hence.
After sixty, the bard, if un-Oslerized, knows
As much as he ought to, and what he says "goes."

A sleepy old fellow this Last Man will be,
But which of us, even the bard cannot see.
Time touches his elbow. He wakes with a start:
"By Jove, it's Commencement! But what's the new part?"

"'Old Hundred' by wireless! The Varsity boys
Have won their degrees; so I judge by the noise."
Thus Time in his ear. And he adds: "By the toot,
You'll soon see the Captain shot in by the chute.

"Chief orator he, at the president's right;
And the maidens in front will rejoice at the sight.
A chorus of Bachelors (parchment is proof)
Will come by the aëroplane down through the roof.

"The music you hear, with its tummy-tum-tum,
Is the new pianolo-electrical drum,
Set up at Niagara — three million power, —
You order an anthem and pay by the hour.

"One touch on the button, up Mendelssohn comes
And saves Paderewski the wear on his thumbs.
Just now is turned on — you remember the song —
'Fair Harvard, thy sons to thy jubilee throng.'

"The whole thing's designed, from the foot of the Falls
To the bell-tower of Sanders and down through the walls,
By a very ingenious mechanical shirk
To throw back on Nature the bulk of man's work.

"The same clever fellow, or one quite as smart,
Brought in the new tutor, well versed in the art
Of swelling a brain of the minus-x power
To the Bachelor's plus in the course of an hour.

"A later device, more abundant in yield,
Transferred all degrees to the new Soldiers' Field.
Now, by common consent, the old Boylston prize
Is assigned to the team that can lick the Elis.

"The football gets Phi Beta Kappa's first ten.
The rest go by choice to the Mott Haven men.
Save the first, all orations the college allots
To the mile, the half-mile and the quarter-mile trots.

"No man is denied a degree who can shout,
Provided he fails not to let his lungs out.
It is well understood now that intellect grows
By a proper attention to fingers and toes.

"Get these into play — give the knuckles a chance —
All bacilli then work for the Cosmic Advance.
How sadly you fellows — you old Sixty-threes —
Went awry, when you toiled so to win your degrees!

"Collins Warren, John Fiske, Ned Drew and Gillet,
Smith, Morison, Greenhalge and Lincoln, who set
Your names on the shore so high that the tide,
You vainly imagined, would let them abide —

"Your celibate Bishop, and Baxter, who best,
Amid cherubs and seraphs, has earned a 'Saint's Rest,'
Locke Etheridge, Brooks, Daniell, Palmer and Peck,
Jim Kilbreth and all on the erudite 'trek' —

"What man of them all won his honors with ease
By lifting his legs through the ninety degrees
Required by the pole-vault, or had the applause
The world now thinks due to the size of man's paws?

"Your experts in dollars and Biblical texts,
Quips, quillets and quodlibets, Justin's Pandects,
Pills, pellets and pots of sanctified oil
That oozed from Saint Andrew and not from the soil, —

"Your masters of plush and the rare Oxford robes,
Gems, germs, the microscope's minim microbes,
Bacilli, bacteria, whose motto has been:
'Divided we conquer, and take the world in' —

"Those mighty ones — tell me — did they win renown
By oiling their joints in the sight of the town?
Did they mix their brains for the journalist's brush
Where the gallant Eleven lined up for the rush?

"Did Sheldon, as yearling, with bit in his jaw,
Romp home in the race for the honors of Law?
Did John Murray Brown list the bulls and the bears,
A quill on his ear as Bookmaker for mares?

"Your Cromwell and Fairchild and Hassam and Lunt,
Frank Higginson, Jackson and Jenks — did they 'punt'?
Was it only as pitchers, with left-handed swerves,
That Pierce and your Eliot taught them their curves?

"Had they only been born in the new Wood-Pulp Age,
What a place had been theirs on the annalist's page!
Had they been so, *you* might have come down with your phiz
On the same page where Nesbit has hers and Thaw his.

"Just think of your Bailey, whose eloquent fist
Came down with a thump that I'm glad that I missed;
Of Goodwin, and Hammond, well known through the land
For the genius that dripped from his uplifted hand;

"Of Mason and Nichols and Shattuck and Shreve,
Joe Lombard and Kidder — you'd hardly believe —"
Just then Time bent closer to get at the ear
Of the Very Last Man, and the bard did not hear.

Yet eloquence shone in the face of old Time,
And Denny will set down that fact without rhyme.
Winslow Warren shall write, where the gray matter swells
To pack away facts in its millions of cells.

Those afferent, efferent, mystical wires
That lift up the song of the nebulous choirs
Where Fiske sits in silence, with ear at the 'phone,
And Time ticks a message for Wisdom alone —

Those marvelous conduits the bard dare not touch,
But leaves them for Bishop and Lawrence and such.
He writes down in rhyme only what he has heard,
And what he now writes is Time's very last word.

Says Time:

"Though I am reputed as first in the van,
And likely to linger behind the Last Man,
I am willing to give the devil his due,
And I whisper the secret of long life to you:

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"Don't work! That's the secret. I know, for I've tried.
I just loaf about and let affairs glide.
You often hear bards sing of Time as a stream:
It's all a delusion — a poet's young dream.

"I am but the banks of Eternity, I —
Just watching the flood as you mortals go by, —
The face of me always abreast of the flow:
From baldness to baldness I see you all go.

"Not a thing have I done since the year Naughty-naught.
When Time, as you call me, began with an Aught.
Even loafing is wearisome, and I must own,
There's nothing that bores me like loafing alone.

"Don't start if I tell you, but, apropos Me,
My watch is called off with my own Sixty-three.
Be calm. Your emotions restrain, if you can,
Slipping down into you, *I'm the Very Last Man!*"

With that, I who sing to you, merely as bard,
Of some thirty years hence, slip out through the Yard,
Get the new helicopt at the next aërodrome,
And shoot up a mile for the nearest way home.

I hear the faint rumble of sub-terrene cars —
The world rolling home with mechanic "Rah-rahs!"
The great pianolo-electrical drum
Beginning the March of the new Kingdom Come.

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